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STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR POPULATION, REFUGEES AND MIGRATION PHYLLIS E. OAKLEY
AT THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES
AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION.

BUJUMBURA, 15-17 FEBRUARY 1995

MR. SECRETARY GENERAL, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, OBSERVER
DELEGATIONS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FIRST OF ALL, LET ME
CONGRATULATE YOU FOR ORGANIZING AND PARTICIPATING IN THIS
IMPORTANT CONFERENCE AND EXPRESS OUR APPRECIATION TO OUR HOSTS,
THE GOVERNMENT OF BURUNDI.

ALTHOUGH I REPRESENT 50 STATES, I WILL BE BRIEF AND TO THE
POINT. LET ME TELL YOU WHY THE U.S. IS HERE. WE ARE HERE
BECAUSE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WERE
SHOCKED AND DEEPLY SADDENED BY LAST YEAR'S GENOCIDE IN RWANDA,
AND THE MASSIVE HUMAN SUFFERING IN BOTH RWANDA AND BURUNDI.
AMERICANS HAVE ALSO BEEN AFFECTED BY THE SERIOUS SOCIAL,
ENVIRONMENTAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CATASTROPHES.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE WANT TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO ASSURE THAT
THOSE APPALLING EVENTS ARE NOT REPEATED.

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WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE WANT TO HELP AMELIORATE THE EFFECTS OF THOSE EVENTS ON THE PEOPLE OF RWANDA, THE PEOPLE OF BURUNDI, AND THEIR NEIGHBORS.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT THE PARTICIPANTS AT THIS CONFERENCE SHARE A DREAM THAT THE PEOPLES OF THIS REGION CAN LIVE IN PEACE AND WELL BEING. WE ARE UNDER NO ILLUSION THAT ACHIEVING THIS WILL BE EASY. WE KNOW IT REQUIRES A COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENT APPROACH WHICH INVOLVES JUSTICE, SECURITY, DIALOGUE, RECONCILIATION, REHABILITATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS CONFERENCE, RETURN OF THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED AND REFUGEES.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT WHATEVER THE WILL OF OUTSIDERS, THE RESTORATION OF INTACT AND HEALTHY SOCIETIES IN RWANDA AND BURUNDI DEPENDS MOST OF ALL ON THE WILL OF THEIR PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENTS. THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE APPEALS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, OF NGOS AND DIRECTLY TO GOVERNMENTS. OUR ABILITY TO SECURE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES DEPENDS HEAVILY ON THE DEMONSTRATED AND ASSERTIVE GOODWILL AND COMMITMENT OF RWANDA, BURUNDI, AND THEIR NEIGHBORS.

LASTLY, WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT THIS CONFERENCE HAS ENORMOUS POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESTORATION OF RWANDA AND BURUNDI AS SOCIETIES AT PEACE WITH THEMSELVES.

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WE CAN EASILY ACHIEVE AN EMPTY AGREEMENT OF ELEGANT PHRASES. OR WE CAN DO A MORE DIFFICULT THING, AND ADOPT A STRONG, REALISTIC ACTION PLAN. THE UNITED STATES COMES TO THIS CONFERENCE TO ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL RESULTS. IF I MAY, I BELIEVE THE SPEECHES OF HIGH COMMISSIONER OGATA AND SECRETARY GENERAL SALIM ARE INDEED THE AGENDA FOR ACTION FOR THIS CONFERENCE.

WE KNOW THAT OUR GOAL, REPATRIATION, REQUIRES JUSTICE. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR GENOCIDE MUST BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE. THERE CAN BE NO IMPUNITY.

WE KNOW THAT REPATRIATION REQUIRES SECURITY. REFUGEES AND THE DISPLACED MUST HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FREELY EXERCISE THE RIGHT OF RETURN. AND THEY MUST BE CONFIDENT THAT WHEN THEY RETURN THEY WILL BE SAFE IN THEIR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES.

WE KNOW THAT REPATRIATION REQUIRES THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOLERATION, ACCEPTANCE. SUCH DEVELOPMENT MUST EXCLUDE THOSE IMPLICATED IN CRIMES. MY DELEGATION HAS NO SET FORMULA FOR PROMOTING A CLIMATE OF TOLERANCE. WE DO KNOW FROM OUR OWN EXPERIENCE THAT TO SUCCEED SUCH A FORMULA MUST INVOLVE ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY UNDER THE RULE OF LAW.

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IN THIS SHORT TIME, I CAN ONLY ADDRESS BROAD PRINCIPLES. HOWEVER, WE ARE KEENLY AWARE THAT APPLICATION OF SUCH PRINCIPLES TO RWANDA AND TO BURUNDI MUST RECOGNIZE THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF EACH NATION.

I SPOKE EARLIER OF THE IMMENSE DISTANCE AND THE COMPLEX ROUTE THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED IF RWANDA AND BURUNDI ARE TO BECOME WHOLE SOCIETIES AGAIN. LET ME ADD A NOTE OF OPTIMISM.

BEFORE COMING HERE, I VISITED THE GOMA CAMPS. I MET WITH GOVERNMENT LEADERS IN KIGALI. AND I TRAVELED FROM KIGALI TO BUJUMBURA BY ROAD, VISITING REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CAMPS IN BURUNDI. I WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY THE PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS IN GOMA SINCE MY VISIT LAST AUGUST. IN KIGALI, I FOUND CONTINUED EXPRESSIONS OF A WILL TO ACHIEVE RETURN, REHABILITATION, AND RECONCILIATION. HERE IN BURUNDI, MULTI-PARTY DIALOGUE AND COMPROMISE LAST SEPTEMBER PRODUCED A BROADLY-BASED COALITION GOVERNMENT. BURUNDI'S WELCOMING THIS CONFERENCE SHOULD ENCOURAGE FURTHER PROGRESS.

BEFORE CLOSING, LET ME CONGRATULATE HIGH COMMISSIONER OGATA AND HER STAFF FOR THEIR DEDICATED AND UNSTINTING WORK IN PROVIDING PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO OVER 3 MILLION UPROOTED PEOPLE UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES.

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DURING MY SECOND VISIT TO THE CAMPS IN GOMA I NOTICED ENORMOUS CHANGES AND WE SAW REFUGEES READY TO RETURN. WE ARE ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO NOTE THAT UNHCR IS MONITORING CLOSELY THE VOLCANOES IN ZAIRE AND IS PREPARING PLANS FOR ACTION TO MINIMIZE THE RISK TO LIVES FROM AN ERUPTION. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF ZAIRE AND RWANDA WILL COOPERATE FULLY.

MR. PRESIDENT, CO-CHAIRPERSONS, DELEGATES, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT HOWEVER DIFFICULT THE ROAD ON WHICH WE ALL ARE EMBARKED, WE CAN ARRIVE AT OUR OBJECTIVES, IF WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO WORKING TOGETHER, AND IF THE PEOPLES OF THE REGION ARE COMMITTED TO A VISION OF THEMSELVES AS UNITED IN A COMMON HUMANITY.

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